

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1779

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2433

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, SY

SUBJ: EXPLOSION AT NATIONAL CASH REGISTER (NCR)

OFFICES, DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO

REF: DAMASCUS 2297; B. STATE 226674

1. SUMMARY: SARG MINECON IMADI GIVES EMBASSY PRIVATE ASSURANCE THAT NATIONAL CASH REGISTER (NCR) WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR DAMAGES. BASED ON SYRIAN NCR REP'S SOUNDINGS WITH SARG OFFICIALS, DEPT SHOULD REASSURE NCR MANAGEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. NCR REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FOR MIDDLE EAST, KARL-TH. STRIEBEL, AND FINANCE AND ADMIN MANAGER FOR MIDDLE EAST, ANTHONY CAMILERI, BOTH FROM NCR/ATHENS, AND SYRIAN NCR REP GEORGES E. ABDINI CALLED ON AMBASSADOR OCT 12 TO REVEIW NCR'S NEXT STEPS FOLLOWING EXPLOSIONS AT NCR OFFICES. IMPORTANT POINT IN THEIR PRESENTATION, IN OUR OPINION, WAS SUCCESS OF NCR IN SYRIA SINCE 1952 (REALLY ALMOST A MONOPOLY) AND FACT THAT NCR SHOULD AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DO GOOD BUSINESS IN SYRIA.

3. ECONOFF UTILIZED OCT 22 CALL ON MINECON IMADI (TO DISCUSS MID AMERICA TRADE/INVESTMENT MISSION) TO RAISE QUESTION OF INSURANCE COVERAGE OF NCR. (SYRIAN GOVERNMENT INSURANCE COMPANY FALLS UNDER MINISTRY OF ECONOMY.) IMADI REPLIED THAT IF SARG INSURANCE COULD NOT PAY COMPENSATION, GOVERNMENT ITSELF WOULD. HE ADDED HE HAD

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ALREADY INTIMATED THIS POSITION TO NCR REP ABDINI. IMADI

ASKED THAT HIS POSITION BE HELD CLOSELY WITHIN THE EMBASSY.

4. ECONOFF LATER MET WITH ABDINI, WHO VOLUNTEERED THAT IMADI HAD STATED IN SEMI-PUBLIC GATHERING (DINNER OCT 13 FOR DEPARTING AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR) SINCERE REGRET OF GOVERNMENT OVER EXPLOSIONS AND RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT TO ASSURE THAT COMPENSATION WAS PAID TO NCR.

5. ABDINI ALSO DETAILED HIS ACTIONS SO FAR:

A. HE HAS SENT LETTERS TO PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS OF INTERIOR AND ECONOMY DETAILING NCR LOSSES AND REQUESTING ASSISTANCE.

B. HAS ENTERED COURT CASE AGAINST MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WHICH HE SAYS IS USUAL PRACTICE IN ORDER TO CAUSE OFFICIAL DAMAGE ESTIMATE REPORT TO BE MADE. THIS REPORT TO BE COMPLETED AROUND OCT 26 AND NCR WILL THEN MAKE OFFICIAL CLAIM TO INSURANCE COMPANY.

C. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SARG OFFICIALS, ABDINI HAS RECEIVED VERY SYMPATHETIC HEARING AND DEFINITE PROMISE OF INCREASED BUSINESS FOR NCR. ABDINI EXPECTS NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER SALES TO TOTAL LS TWO MILLION (\$547,000), EQUAL TO OR WELL OVER ANNUAL 12-MONTH AVERAGE FOR PAST SEVERAL YEARS.

6. ABDINI CONCLUDES THAT MATTERSSO FAR PROCEEDING VERY SMOOTHLY AND, WHIEL COMPENSATION MAY TAKE SOME TIME GIVEN SARG BUREAUCRACY, HE DOES EXPECT COMPENSATION PLUS EXTRA BUSINESS.

7. COMMENT: ABDINI MAY REFLECT MORE OPTIMISTIC VIEW AND NCR V-P ANDREW S. GILLAN IN DAYTON, OHIO MAY BE TAKING MORE PESSIMISTIC AND ALARMING VIEW (HE HAS NEVER VISITED DAMASCUS, ACCORDING TO ABDINI). WE TEND TOWARD OPTIMISM BASED ON MINECON IMADI'S VERY FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE AND HIS FIRM RESOLVE NOT TO ALLOW SUCH EVENTS TO TARNISH SARG EFFORTS TO ATTRACT WESTERN INVESTMENT AND ENCOURAGE CLOSER US-SYRIAN ECONOMIC TIES. WE APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S CONFIDENTIAL

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ENCOURAGEMENT OF NCR/DAYTON (PARA 3, REF B) AND HOPE THIS EFFORT CAN BE CONTINUED. WHILE WE CANNOT PASS ON IMADI'S PRIVATE ASSURANCES TO GILLAN, WE WOULD RECOMMEND PASSING CONTENTS PARAS 4,5, AND 6 TO GILLAN AND CONTINUE EFFORTS TO REASSURE NCR MANAGEMENT IN US.
MURPHY

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